



Youngsters at the Green Man Mother and Toddler Group resist the temptation to chew their medals after completing their Pedal Push! Photo by Helen Drake.

Pedal push for Childline

By Helen Drake

Bikes, dolly pushchairs and toy carts were all put to good use by children at the Green Man Mother and Toddler Group on Thursday 6 October when they took part in 'Pedal Push', a national fundraising event for the charity Childline.

The children at the Green Man in Strawberry Vale joined toddlers and youngsters from nurseries and playgroups across the UK taking part in

this annual event, launched in 1995, which has raised over £1 million for Childline. Children are sponsored to pedal, push or ride around a small course set up in their local centre.

Organisers Vanessa Elsley and Barbara Poulter were surprised by the good driving skills of the children. The youngest participant was six-month-old Sienna who enjoyed being pushed around the obstacle course by her mum, Nicola Hargrave.

The Green Man Mother and Toddler Group meets on Thursday mornings from 9.30-11.30am during term time at the Green Man Community Centre.

Launched in October 1986, Childline is a free 24-hour helpline (0800 1111) for children and young people in distress or danger in the UK. For more information or to make a donation go to www.childline.org.uk

Explore Parkland Walk

By Craig Johnson

Parkland Walk is the longest of the three nature reserves in Haringey, the others being Queens Wood and Railway Fields.

This 4.5 mile linear green walkway follows the course of the railway which used to run from Finsbury Park through Highgate to Alexandra Palace. It was opened in the 1980s and is looked after by dedicated warden Mr David Hope. You can find entrances off Shepherd's Hill next to Highgate tube station.

The grooviest animal that lives there has to be the Chinese Muntjac, which could explain why these small deer are popping up in front gardens in East Finchley.

Plant lovers will be happy to know that there are around 100 species of flower growing there, with buddleia from western China flowering on the 17-arch brick viaduct at the Crouch End Station path.

Peering through the hanging ivy at the top of one of these arches is a large sculpture of a Spriggan, which relates to Cornish folklore. It is said that these cousins of the pixie, which grow into giant form, will put a curse on anyone who mistreats the pixies. They will also lead lost persons astray and steal chil-



The Spriggan. Photo by Craig Johnson

dren, turning them into their own forms, so be careful!

Sadly there has been a 70% increase in crime here recently, so parks police are on patrol with bylaws in place to sort out any troublemakers along the walk. You can see more photos of the Parkland Walk at

www.britphoto.net and get more information at www.btcv.org.uk. BTCV is the UK's largest practical conservation charity. Founded in 1959, it helps volunteers take hands-on action to improve both the rural and urban environment.

The lady of the lake

By Lucy Chamberlin

Isn't it annoying when you're doing indoor lane swimming and someone just a bit faster creeps up behind you and smugly overtakes you? Don't you sometimes resent the monotony of white tiles and buzzing strip lights? Wouldn't you like to be in the open air?

Like Wyn Cornwell and Frieda Schweizer (*THE ARCHER*, May and September 2005), I can recommend the Hampstead Ladies' Pond. Although their fantastic combined age of 182 eclipses my 21, I have been a Pond swimmer for 10 years (summer only, although I do have designs to join the winter-swimming elite).

After the first cold shock and acclimatisation, which seems to take about half-a-pond's length, it is the sense of space and freedom that gets you. With the late afternoon sun on the reeds and the Heath beyond, the view from the water in summer is an image of tranquillity. Even in the rain it is beautiful.

Moving at your own pace you

can enjoy the setting, serenaded on weekend afternoons by Kenwood concert rehearsals. Herons and resident families of moorhens are frequent sights; last month there were also kingfishers, a couple of exotic-looking ducks and a flock of parakeets in the surrounding trees.

Plunging into the 15ft depths, you encounter murky green light, re-emerging thankful to gulp down oxygen and not to have touched the bottom. Whatever is under the surface is a mystery and should remain so.

The best thing about swimming in the Pond is that this source of rejuvenation and *joie-de-vivre* is also exercise, to be found not far from East Finchley.

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